Recent Rescues

What do a Sumatran tiger, two bobcats, one raccoon, 80 prairie dogs, three iguanas, and more than 100 dogs and cats have in common? They are just some of the animals NRRO has helped rescue since our last newsletter!

Some, such as the tiger and prairie dog rescues, were involved and included housing, transport, and treatment or surgeries while in our care. Others, such as the bobcats and raccoon, simply needed a safe, permanent place to live.

But in every case, NRRO helped resolve the situation humanely. For some, that meant transporting them during our normal work-related travels. On a recent trip to Bozeman, for example, we gave a lift to a dog and three iguanas. The dog came from the Rimrock Humane Society in Roundup, Montana, and went to Bozeman, where other volunteers ferried him to his new home in Washington State. The iguanas had been surrendered by their owner. We helped them make their way to Big Sky, Montana, where an Idaho wildlife rescue group picked them up to place in a lifelong home.

Cases such as these come to us because we have developed the resources and connections to find good permanent homes for animals in need and because we’re known to go the extra miles to help.

NRRO Responds to CA Wildfires

NRRO Program Coordinator Suzi Hansen had just arrived at the San Bernardino, California, Red Cross shelter to help with animal rescue efforts during the recent wildfires. She noticed something that concerned her: Fire evacuation victims were camping in the parking lot with their pets.

Why was this happening? Why weren’t these people taking their pets to the emergency animal shelter?

The answer to her question would have to wait, because once Hansen entered the main Red Cross shelter, people got one glimpse of her HSUS T-shirt and swarmed over. “My cat is still at my house in the evacuated area. Who do I call to rescue him?” asked one woman. “My dog was at the Big Bear shelter and now that shelter has been evacuated. How do I find her?” asked another man. Another person had lost her pet in the fire and was feeling guilty and grief-stricken.

What was needed here was an information booth inside the Red Cross shelter. Hansen got the green light from the Red Cross administration, and a booth was soon staffed with HSUS and San Bernardino Humane Society staff and volunteers ready to provide information and pet-loss counseling.

Now it was time to investigate what was going on in the parking lot. Hansen went out with a volunteer team lugging bags filled with leashes, pet toys, treats, and information packets about the emergency animal shelter and programs such as free microchipping, vaccinations, and veterinary care. They let people know where to call for animal rescue assistance and gave out phone numbers and the locations of area animal shelters and humane societies.

Among those in the parking lot was a group of Vietnam veterans who were camping out with their dogs and cats. They had erected a sign amidst their lawn chairs designating the place “Camp Snoopy.” They—like many others in the parking lot—had elected to stay with their animals 24-7 until they were allowed to return to their homes. They couldn’t have been a better endorsement of the HSUS message to take your animals with you during a disaster. Their laughter and the love they displayed for their pets stood out amid the chaos.

During the parking lot sweep, the HSUS team encountered many pet owners and even members of the media who were unaware of the animal services being offered to the community. Soon after the teams completed their rounds, the phones at the San Bernardino County Animal Control toll-free hot line buzzed with calls. The requests to have animals rescued from evacuated areas doubled, as did requests for information about the area animal shelters. The outreach effort was a success!

“It was truly a rewarding experience, helping the California wildfire victims during the week of my deployment,” said Hansen. “Their spirit of survival and kindness to animals will always remain in my heart.”
Adapting to Fit Regional Needs

N RRO has always provided rapid response mobile help when asked. And having the right equipment is crucial when we go out to offer spay/neuter clinics or help rescue animals in hoarder cases or disasters. We have a 16-foot Wells Cargo utility trailer, which was designed to haul equipment for any type of animal need. We have used it successfully to respond to major events such as Camp Collie, regional wildfires, and native nation clinics. It was an excellent response tool, with a wish list of modifications to make better communications equipment, such as animal decontamination and animal terrorism. In Utah we have already made two disaster presentations, including a keynote address and workshop at the January 2004 state convention in St. George. During the St. George trip, we visited more than a dozen local shelters and one native nation in southern Utah to meet some of the people we hope to join in field projects. Within two years, we hope to have visited the majority of the local animal shelters and wildlife centers in these two new NRRO states.

Join the Great Trailer Trade-In

What do spring floods, summer wildfires, and livestock cruelty cases all have in common? They all need NRRO’s rescue teams to assist local shelters or government agencies. Since the conclusion of the Camp Collie case (see spring 2003 “NRRO Regional News”), our office has stockpiled dozens of portable dog kennels, collapsible dog pens, and pet airplane crates. But each time we need to get them where they’re needed, we have to rent flatbed trailers for the job. When we respond to livestock or hoarder cases, we have to borrow or rent trailers to transport these animals to safer housing. We are now working with a regional trailer dealer on the purchase of an appropriate pull-behind trailer that will meet both our livestock rescue and kennel transport needs. And if you have an underused trailer, you may be able to help. NRRO will accept donations of older or late model pull-behind or fifth-wheel livestock, utility, RV, snowmobile, or other type of trailer. We will give you a receipt for tax purposes. The trailer dealer will market the donated trailers, while giving us credit towards the purchase of the specialty trailer that we need. This is an opportunity to donate your unused or surplus trailer to the cause of helping our office acquire equipment that will enable us to respond in hours instead of days to requests for help with disasters or cruelty cases.

If you don’t have a used trailer to donate to the cause, you can give monetary donations to a special fund that has been established. Please send your check with a short note requesting that the donation be used to purchase the NRRO rescue trailer. If you have questions about how you might help with this project, please contact our office.

Case Update

The dogs pictured below were part of a collection of 406 huskies kept by one Alaskan resident. NRRO and HSUS’s Rural Area Veterinary Services assisted local veterinarians with the neutering of them all (see fall 2003 “NRRO Regional News”). The owner also volunteers up nearly half his dogs for adoption. Many of the less socialized dogs spent time in foster care and have now been adopted into loving homes.

Arna Isacsson of K9 Kind in Fairbanks, Alaska, with three of the dogs her group helped NRRO place into loving homes.

Help Protect Backyard Wildlife

Perhaps you already provide bird feeders, water, and other habitat improvements for the wildlife in your neighborhood. Or perhaps you have wondered how you can ensure that your land permanently protects the wildlife living on it. The HSUS has programs for both, recognizing backyard sanctuaries and accepting conservation easements or donations of land to The HSUS Wildlife Land Trust. Both programs can give you assistance and recognition in your efforts to promote wildlife habitat. If you want more information about the opportunities available to help our wild neighbors, please contact our office.

Want To Be More Involved? Here’s How!

By the time you read this, The HSUS will have spent several months building a model rapid notification system. This system will contain a database that will allow us to phone, fax, e-mail, or mail notices about legislative calls to action, disaster response, or help with major hoarder cases. Our first priority is to get all the government agencies and nonprofit animal protection groups into the database. Next we plan to include breed- or species-specific animal rescue groups, veterinarians, and others who can help when the need arises. But we also want to include anyone else who wants to be in this database. So if you have a special interest in passing pro-animal legislation, or in helping out cases such as Camp Collie, or have a special skill (computer whiz, dog groomer, pilot), or own equipment we could use (boat, RV, or horse trailer), we would love to get that information into our database.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about
Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative. Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency. Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

I can volunteer my time, skills and talents to help animals.

I’m a dog lover, and I want to help animals.

I can donate money in any amount.

I can donate property.

I can donate services.

I can provide an estate gift.

I want to learn more about other ways I can help.

Please fax this form to 406-255-7182 or mail it in the enclosed envelope to NRRO, 490 N. 31st St., Ste. 215, Billings, MT 59101.
Dave’s Dialogue

By Dave Pauli
Director of the Northern Rockies Regional Office

The HSUS: Five Decades of Serving People and Animals

It is truly difficult to comprehend the positive impact for animals that The HSUS has had since 1954. The long list of accomplishments ranges from federal and state legislation, to landmark policy decisions, to needed programs such as Animal Care Expo and Humane Society International. Wow!

Regrettfully, I have only been an active part of this HSUS legacy since 1991, but in those 13 years, I have seen firsthand the impact that a few hundred dedicated employees can have on a nation’s treatment of animals.

To bring this closer to us and our six great states, it means that The HSUS was providing beneficial services long before we opened the Northern Rockies Regional Office in August 1991. Great accomplishments such as the Animal Welfare Act in 1966 and The Horse Protection Act in 1972 were keystone events in helping animals nationwide. There have been dozens of other HSUS-supported federal, state, or local laws and programs that helped animals both before and after we opened the Billings office.

I am proud to say that I have been part of The HSUS family for just over one-quarter of its history. I have seen how the intellectual, physical, and personnel resources of The HSUS can positively and directly impact animals. And I want to concentrate on just a few examples for you today. In NRRO’s history, major cases such as Ligertown (26 escaped lions) jump to the forefront in terms of the immediate and positive impact we can have on animals. Without HSUS backing and leadership, this tragic case could have been much worse, and more of these exotic feline victims would have simply been gunned down. In another Idaho case—the zoo lady case—it was The HSUS that worked with the courts to sponsor 11 days of volunteer property cleanup and animal placement to humanely deal with this collection of hundreds of dogs, cats, and wild animals. Other more recent cases include Camp Collie, in which The HSUS played key roles in organizing the evidentiary convoy of 200 animals and purchasing nearly half the large dog kennels needed to house 180 collies. Such cases can simply overwhelm local and even state agencies.

But perhaps the best example of how The HSUS has made a difference was demonstrated just a few months ago when seven pro-animal bills passed in our Western states. Surely it takes many groups and individuals to get pro-animal bills passed in our conservative legislatures. But with the help and technology of The HSUS and its state and federal legislation staff, we are able to supply the accurate information and background legislators seek to make sound decisions. In 2003, both Montana and Wyoming passed felony animal cruelty bills. Both were hard fought, nearly killed several times, but finally passed by good margins. Both were the result of HSUS-sponsored meetings to get folks together to pursue sound legislation. It is this type of team building and networking that will carry The HSUS into another 50 years of excellent service for the people and animals who share this Earth.

Ten years ago, NRRO helped rescue and place these dogs and nearly 500 of their companions in Montana.